

COMESA ELECTORAL Observer Mission to the 2009 General Election of the Republic of Malawi

At the invitation of the Electoral Commission of the Republic of Malawi, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa has deployed an Electoral Observer Mission to observe the 2009 General Elections of the Republic of Malawi. The Mission shall be led by Ambassador Otema Musuka, former Zambian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Former Zambian Ambassador to the United Nations.

The Electoral Observer Mission which is already in Malawi is composed of eminent men and women from the following COMESA Member States: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Mission shall be deployed to all the three regions of the Country.

COMESA sends electoral observer missions to her Member States on invitation in fulfillment of Treaty obligations of promoting peace and security as well as promoting Democracy, Good Governance and the Rule of Law



Head of Delegation

Final touches on the COMESA Customs Launch

The twenty third meeting of the Trade and Customs Committee (TCC) was held in Manzini, Swaziland on 4-6 May 2009. The meeting was preceded by two preparatory meetings: the fourth meeting of the Task Force on Regional Trade Policy and the second meeting of the National Task Teams on Sensitive Products and Tariff Alignment.

The main objective of the TCC was to finalise preparations for the launch of the customs union. Other issues the meeting addressed were: the free trade area, non-tariff barriers, services, the tripartite process, the competition authority, WTO and EPA negotiations, AGOA, PACT II and Trade Point Program. Microsoft made a presentation on trade facilitation through paperless electronic procedures.

On launching the customs union, the

meeting recommended that schedule I (on products already aligned to the common external tariff) be adopted, that member states submit their lists of sensitive products by 20 May 2009, that member states should use the COMESA Common Tariff Nomenclature in their national tariffs, and that there should be a transition period during which member states will align the rest of their tariffs to the common external tariff and undertake other required activities to have a full customs union.

Regarding follow up activities after the launch, the meeting recommended that a standing committee be established, called the Committee on Regional Trade Policy of the Customs Union, with the mandate to monitor the customs union and review the CET, providing annual reports to the policy organs. In addition, the secretariat will study the revenue implications of the 5% tariff band, and

elaborate a work program to address the challenges of establishing and implementing the customs union

On the free trade area, the meeting requested a report on the readiness of the four countries that have not join the FTA - this report should be presented to the Intergovernmental committee (IC) scheduled late this month; it further recommended that bilateral meetings on the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) should be held at Ministerial level to assist expedite finalization and implementation of decisions.

With regard to Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), the member states expressed willingness to eliminate them in some cases at a bilateral level so as to promote trade in the region.

On Economic Partnership Agreement

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Zambia Ratifies the COMESA Fund

The Republic of Zambia has ratified the COMESA Protocol for Establishment of the Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development (COMESA Fund). The deposition of the Instrument of Ratification of the Protocol by the Republic of Zambia brings to ten the number of COMESA Member States that have so far ratified the Protocol which entered into force last year. Zambia's ratification comes in the heels of the ratification of the Protocol by the Seychelles which deposited its

- instrument of ratification with the
- COMESA Secretariat earlier this
- year.
- Article 150 of the COMESA Treaty
- provides for the establishment
- of the COMESA Fund for
- addressing special problems of
- underdeveloped areas such as
- infrastructure development among
- other things and disadvantages
- arising out of the integration
- process such as revenue loss,
- economic and social adjustment

Regional Integration Key to Promoting Competitiveness and Trade

Representatives from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC) were among the forty+ partners at the April launch of the USAID Competitiveness and Trade Expansion Program (COMPETE), designed to facilitate increased trade and competitiveness in regional and global markets.

Africa contributes only three percent of the value of goods traded globally. Building capacity in local markets to make them more competitive will help to increase trade in regional and global markets and help to reduce poverty in the region.

COMPETE will work to: 1) Reduce barriers to trade; 2) Increase competitiveness and market access in selected value chains including staple foods, and; 3) Increase trade and investment between the U.S. and Eastern and Central Africa via the ECA Trade Hub.

COMPETE builds on the success of two prior USAID programs, the Regional Agriculture and Trade Expansion (RATES) program that was hosted at COMESA Secretariat and the East African Community Trade Hub. By combining the best aspects of these programs, COMPETE takes a holistic approach to addressing the constraints and promoting the opportunities available to African companies to increase their competitiveness and trade with the United States and global markets. To much applause, USAID East Africa Regional Director Cheryl Anderson affirmed, "There is a great deal of exuberance and enthusiasm for this integrated approach."

COMPETE will partner with private sector-led Regional Trade Associations, COMESA

and the EAC to enhance competitiveness and trade in targeted sectors and create tools that will allow small farmers to participate more effectively in regional trade. The goal is to reduce barriers to trade and help firms adopt international quality standards that make them more competitive in regional and global markets.

COMPETE plans to promote a 15% reduction in the time and cost of transporting goods along selected transport corridors, and a 30% increase in value and volume of international trade and of intra-regional trade for targeted value chains. The tools, support and expertise offered through COMPETE make it an opportune time for Africa to take up the challenge.

COMESA Director of Investment, Promotion and Private Sector Development, Dr. Chungu Mwila, and EAC Director of Trade, Dr. Flora Musonda and who represented their respective institutions pledged their support to ensure COMPETE's success.

The U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Pamela Slutz, stressed COMPETE's strategic importance for enhancing the competitiveness of African economies in trade and in investment, especially during challenging economic times. She also noted the timeliness of COMPETE, coinciding with the August Nairobi-based AGOA Forum.

COMPETE is planned for approximately four years for up to \$84 million and is implemented by Chemonics International with Crimson Capital, Integrated Development Consultants, Dexis Consulting Group, Global Business Solutions and PRIME International.

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with the European Union, the meeting called for the implementation of the Tripartite Summit decision on the coordination and harmonization of EPA positions between the ESA, EAC and SADC configurations.

Regarding Trade in Services, the Committee recommended the adoption of the Framework by the higher organs subject to consensus on the outstanding issue on Vulnerable States. The Framework was produced by trade and legal experts at last month's meeting held in Entebbe in Uganda.

The meeting recognised the importance of the decisions made by the Tripartite Summit of COMESA, EAC and SADC, held in October last year, and requested the Secretariat to keep updating the member States on developments regarding implementation of those decisions.

The meeting welcomed the prioritization of economic transformation through value addition, diversification and access to regional and global markets, which will be pursued through the Program for Building African Capacity for Trade (PACT II). It was recommended that training of stakeholders was important and should be undertaken in collaboration with existing institutions and that the program should gradually cover more and more sectors.

The meeting appreciated a Single Window IT system presented by Microsoft Corporation and requested the Secretariat to approach cooperating partners that could assist interested member States to adopt the system. This system facilitates regional and global trade and specifically assists in compliance with requirements set in major export markets such as the European Union.

COMESA launches US\$3.4 Million Statistical Capacity Building Project



Sindiso Ngwenya - COMESA

At its meeting of 27th November, 2008, the Executive Board of the African Development Bank Group approved a grant allocation of US\$36 million for statistical capacity building activities in African Countries for the period 2009-2010.

COMESA Secretariat as one of the implementing Sub Regional Organizations in Africa will administer US\$3.4 Million of this grant in assisting its Member States implement statistical capacity building programs in four cluster areas approved by the AfDB. These areas are in the following clusters and will be based on the priorities as enunciated in the Member States' National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDS) or the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP);

- Group 1: (a) NSDS update or design; (b) improving national accounts, prices and economic statistics in general; (c) ICP work; and (d) statistical training (through support for Statistical Training Centers or in-country training programs);
- Group 2: Improving social statistics, poverty monitoring and analysis through assisting countries to improve the quality and timeliness of statistical outputs with respect to population and housing censuses; household surveys; poverty PPPs, and MDG monitoring including promoting a balanced mix of administrative records,



Donald Kaberuka - ADB

censuses, and sample surveys. It is important to note that this particular grant cannot be used for executing large scale undertakings such as Population Censuses, Agriculture Censuses, household surveys, etc. for which funds could be sought from other windows in the Bank. Nonetheless, the grant could be used for carrying out work at the preparatory and analytical phases of these activities.

- Group 3: Support for agriculture and rural development statistics; governance; infrastructure; gender; environment; and climate change statistics;
- Group 4: Support to countries to improve data processing, storage, and dissemination systems for statistical

This project follows the successful completion AfDB-COMESA International Comparison Program and will build on some of the work undertaken in the earlier collaboration between the two organizations.

In signing the Protocol of Agreement between the AfDB and COMESA, COMESA Secretary General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, reiterated the important role statistics play in evidenced based monitoring and policy analysis and welcomed the new collaboration between the two organizations.

Gender Experts to review regional performance.

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The COMESA Secretariat will hold the Fifth Technical Committee Meeting on Gender from 18th - 19th May 2009 at the COMESA Centre, Lusaka, Zambia.

The objective of the meeting is to identify progress made by the COMESA Secretariat in implementing Decisions of the Council of Ministers that arose from recommendations of the Third Meeting of the Ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs in the COMESA Region that took place in April last year.

The meeting will also evaluate progress made by member states in implementing the Five years COMESA Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Action Plan and map out the way forward in implementing the COMESA Gender Policy.

Having looked at all the above the meeting will map out forward looking strategies to implement practical projects that would enhance regional integration towards the economic empowerment of women.

Delegates to the meeting will include Principal/ Permanent Secretaries and heads of gender and women's affairs as well as other gender experts and representatives from COMESA countries.